EU/Gambia Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement and Implementation Protocol

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The Committee on Fisheries adopted the report by Carmen AVRAM (S&D, RO) on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of The Gambia and of the Protocol on the implementation of that Partnership Agreement.

The committee recommended that the European Parliament give its consent to the conclusion of the Agreement and Protocol.

The new agreement repeals and replaces the existing agreement, which entered into force on 2 June 1987 but expired in the meantime. The new Protocol covers a period of six years from the date of its provisional application and is renewable by tacit agreement.

The main aim of the new Agreement is to provide an updated framework taking into account the priorities of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy and its external dimension, by granting fishing opportunities to European Union vessels in Gambian waters, taking into account the best available scientific advice, while promoting a sustainable fisheries policy and sound exploitation of fishery resources, in the interest of both parties

The fishing opportunities granted to the European Union vessels concern, on the one hand, the highly migratory species – 28 freezer tuna seiners and 10 pole-and-lines – and, on the other hand, the deep-water demersal fish – 3 trawlers.

Under the strict provisions envisaged by the Protocol on the implementation of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement, the total financial contribution paid by the Union shall be set at EUR 3 300 000, meaning EUR 550 000 per year.

An annual amount of EUR 275 000 will be paid by the European Union for access to the fisheries resources in the Gambian fishing zone, equivalent to a reference tonnage, for highly migratory species, of 3 300 tonnes per year, while the other half of this yearly contribution will be used, as structural support, to strengthen the sustainable management of fisheries resources and the development of the Gambian fishing sector.

The Agreement covers the cooperation in the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and the promotion of the blue economy, including aquaculture. Also, a special support will be given to the artisanal fisheries sector, which is now facing difficult times.

The explanatory statement accompanying the recommendation stressed that there should be a very strong scientific cooperation on responsible fishing between the European Union and the Republic of The Gambia. This cooperation should focus on exploratory fisheries and new fishing opportunities, good cooperation between the economic operators, and the much needed electronic exchanges of data, in order for Gambia to make important steps towards a sustainable fishing attitude.

Structural support will help the country overcome constraints such as the lack of storage facilities, the high cost of energy and poor management, which, lately, resulted in some of the fish factories going bankrupt.